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The Laity Organizes

Late in June, the National Association of Laymen came into being and it deserves the warmest welcome and encouragement from the Catholics of America.

In its Constitution, the N.A.L. sets forth its goals with clarity and conviction: 1) "To promote and encourage continued renewal in the Church." 2) "To stimulate an authentic, free and responsible lay voice in the Church." 3) "To assist the renewal efforts of individuals and local organizations." 4) "To encourage the exchange of ideas on every level within and without the Christian Community." 5) "To encourage initiative for seeking solutions to problems affecting the community of men." 6) "To establish and maintain effective liaison with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and other national organizations."

After the serious deliberations of eight workshops, a general assembly was presented with six basic resolutions and a package of 38 specific proposals. These grew out of discussion on matters relating to marriage and the family, diocesan and parochial administration, education, communications, human dignity, ecumenism, liturgy, and the life of the parish. The six general resolutions won immediate acceptance; while the specific resolutions were thought to need further reflection by the Executive Committee. The delegates were emphatic on the need of publishing these final resolutions well in advance of the next meeting of the American bishops.

Running through all of the discussions was the accepted conviction, "that the prevailing structures and practices of the Institutional Church, are, with rare exceptions, not adapted to such exercises of lay initiative, and need to be modified to allow for it."

The launching of this significant organization was accomplished by individuals and representatives from lay organizations in twelve states. Reports indicate that the average delegate was well educated, from one of the professions, a member of a local lay organization, and in the 30 to 50 age group. A much needed organization has become a reality at last. If it enjoys a healthy growth it can have a decisive influence on the renewal of the Church. JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

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The Future of Theology

Rev. Walter J. Burghardt, S.J.

A living message which supports the legitimate desires and noble aspirations of modern man.

Today is an age of crises. I mean an age of critical issues that agonize the heart of man. There is the crisis of war: how much blood may a human being shed for justice' sake? There is the crisis of race: where dare a human being draw the color line? There is the crisis of sex: what may two human beings do in the name of love? There is the crisis of poverty: how long must two fifths of the world go hungry? There is the crisis of religion: at what point does a form of worship become heresy or idolatry?

War and peace, white and black, man and woman, rich and poor, Catholic and Protestant—these are indeed critical issues. But I submit that at this moment in history there is a crisis more crucial, more basic, than any of these. The most critical issue of all is not bombs, not skin, not morals, not food, not even church. It is the crisis of God. What can a human being believe? In the twentieth century, is belief still possible? And if it is, how does the man of today touch God? How does God touch him?

The problem is not artificial, not exaggerated. It rises from a root newness in contemporary man and in his world. A new kind of man. A whole generation has grown up—is still growing up—young men and women who do not look at the world the way I do, do not use words the way I do, do not quite think the way I do, do not find meaning where I find it. More to the point, their experience of God is different

from mine. There are Christians among them, but Christians who do not discover God in the things they see and hear and touch, are insensitive to the insight of a poet like Plunkett:

I see His blood upon the rose,
And in the stars the glory of His eyes,
His body gleams amid eternal snows,
His tears fall from the skies.

There are scholars among them, men of learning, but men for whom philosophical arguments to prove God's existence are stale, flat, and unprofitable; for whom order and beauty, intelligence and contingency point not to God but to man. There are theologians among them, but theologians who will have nothing to do with a God "out there," a heaven "up there," a hell "down there." There are poets and painters among them, artists of every description, but artists committed to Nothing with a capital N; for whom man's dignity and hope lie in his ability to confront, with courage

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In addition to his extensive writing and ecumenical work, Father Burghardt teaches Patristic Theology at Woodstock College and is Managing Editor of Theological Studies.

and with joy, a life that is senseless, useless, absurd; artists whose basic affirmation is Samuel Beckett's "two times anything equals zero." There are ever more men and women who fail to find God in the structures wherein we have grown up—in our churches and our theologies, in our worship and our piety—who do not hear God's voice in our Bible, do not taste His flesh at our Supper. The new man is man everywhere—the countless men and women who, if they encounter God at all, encounter Him primarily in experiencing His absence.

A NEW WORLD

This new man lives in a new world. The historian Thomas Berry has focused on three characteristics of the contemporary world that differentiate it radically from the old. First, its universalism. There simply are no isolated islands—whether nations or cultures or continents. "The thoughts and problems of one man are now the thoughts and problems of the entire world. The creative work of one part of the world is shared almost instantly by the entire world." Second, this new world is not fixed, not static; it is developmental, dynamic. The reality of structures is change. And so we speak "not of cosmos but of cosmogenesis, not of fixed species but of biogenesis, not of mankind as a determined reality but of anthropogenesis, for man is making himself at the same time as he is in a manner making the world." Third, humanism. Contemporary man centers not on some cosmic order, not on the divine, not on God, but on man.

Given this root newness in today's man and his world, tomorrow's theology dare not simply mouth yesterday's. The Second Vatican Council has suggested broad lines of direction which a theology in tune with the times must take. Such a theology will be at once more authentically biblical and historical; for it will wrestle with the revelation once-for-all given and the ceaseless efforts of the Christian ages to grasp it and express it and live it and teach it to new generations. Tomorrow's theology will be more anthropological, in that it will search out man as he is, with flesh and bones, inward-

ly divided because at once sin-full and still God's image, alternating between hope and despair, love and hate, life and death.

It will be more pastoral, not in the sense of "instant application," fast-working bromides for confessor and counselor; rather in that its burning questions will rise in significant measure from the anguish of contemporary man, and will never lose from sight the People of God in whose service theology operates—yes, even the vast and growing majority of men who know not Christ and care not. It will be more ecumenical, in that Protestants and others severed from us will not be primarily adversaries but co-operators in a common concern, the effort of faith not simply to understand but to unite in love. It will be more eschatological, not in a lyric leap to a more abiding abode, but in its awareness of a pilgrim people in movement now and tomorrow and every day, through the demonic and the salvific, to the consummation of their corporate oneness in Christ.

PERSON WITHIN COMMUNITY

These conciliar guidelines for tomorrow's theology find a rich resonance, a fascinating focus, in a facet of contemporary thinking and living that means much to America's young. I mean the emphasis today on person—more accurately, person within community. I mean person as set over against thing; truth as it touches me in contrast to truth in itself; reality in its relation to living persons rather than reality disembodied, somewhere "out there"; interpersonal encounter in place of isolated independence.

You see, today's man is vividly aware that he is not fully a person except insofar as he is related to another person, to a community of persons. He must be "for others," as Jesus was "for others"; else he is no one, he is nothing. This is why for him love is the all-important thing, why for him love overrides law. This is why he will march on Selma even at the risk of his life, will teach school in Nigeria or build homes in Appalachia, will volunteer for Vietnam or even rage against it. This is

why he has little patience with learning that is not lived, with truth that is not done—and done in love. To be fully a person, he must be open to others, must communicate himself to another, must give of himself without ceasing to be himself. It is in others that he expects to find himself, and it is in others that he hopes to find God.

This is an extraordinary development, this stress on person within community; and just as it promises to reinvigorate our faith, so it bids fair to revolutionize our theology. In dealing with revelation, it is no longer legitimate for the theologian to put the major stress on God's formal utterance, be it the commandments from Sinai or the Sermon on the Mount. The words are important, of course—as are the events of salvation history; but the words, like the events, are only the vehicle of revelation. Revelation is God's self-disclosure, whereby a divine Person communicates Himself, a community of divine Persons communicate Themselves, to a human person, to a community of human persons, and the human person and human community react with a personal response that is intelligent love, total self-giving, Christian faith.

A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

In Trinitarian theology, the primary emphasis will no longer fall on the inner relations between the three Persons, but on the mission of the Spirit from the Father through the Son into the heart of the believer. Correspondingly, the treatment of grace will give less place to a quality or habit that modifies the substance of the soul, more place to Trinitarian presence, to the promise of Christ: "If any man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." Grace will be seen more and more as, on God's side, God offering Himself to man, communicating His life to man, demanding from man love and fidelity; on man's side, man offering himself to God, man transformed, shaped to Christ. A profoundly personal encounter, therefore: not primarily

a philosophical category, but living persons intimately linked in loving union.

In sacramental theology, the accent can no longer fall on the number seven, on the external rite or ceremony, on validity and efficacy. What will be stressed is that in these symbolic acts, more than anywhere else, the Church encounters the individual, and in this encounter with the Church the individual encounters Christ. Not simply in some idea of Him, some image or picture of Him; not only the ontological oneness that is so crucial; but even an intuition of Him (dark, yes, but thrillingly rich) that comes from loving surrender to Him—an interaction of knowledge and love.

ACCENT ON UNITY

Tomorrow's ecclesiology will lay less stress on the juridical elements in the Church, more on the transcendent, on the Church as mystery, because filled with the presence of God; less emphasis on the vertical, the hierarchical, the Church as pyramid from pope to people, more emphasis on the horizontal, on the community of all the baptized, on the common priesthood of the faithful as prior in God's design to the structure that divides. Emphasis, therefore, on the whole People of God as one community of service, of worship, of love. Emphasis, consequently, on what unites the churches, the sects, the denominations, the Christian communities: separated brethren seen more as brethren than as separated.

The theology of redemption will pay less heed to retributive justice, will stress as the goal of Christ's redeeming activity the new covenant between God and man—a covenant that puts in clear relief the loving initiative of the Father, revealed and made present in the Son enfleshed, and the need of the human community and the individual person to add their love-laden yes to Christ's filial response to the Father.

The "last things," eschatology, will take on new personal dimensions. Death for a Christian has never been merely a biological fact that calls for a "stiff upper lip." But over and above that, death must be seen not primarily as a punishment for sin

to be accepted with Christian resignation. In Christian realism, death is something *I do*: it is my final option, my definitive decision, to share in the redemptive death of Christ or to abide inescapably in sin. Even hell will appear in a more personalist perspective: utter frustration of the whole person, endless alienation from Life, endless absence of Love—such total aloneness that even creation is hostile, even flesh and blood will not comfort. And heaven? The emphasis will hardly be on the vision of God “face to face,” significant as this is; the accent will fall on perfect fulfillment in loving union: I, this selfsame person, ceaselessly and ecstatically one with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one with the community of love.

Tomorrow’s moral theology will be more obviously based on the gospel. It will find its center in New Testament love: Christian morality is a loving response to the love of God revealed in Christ, a response tested and proved indeed in day-to-day fidelity to the law of Christ, but at bottom and always a response of love.

A NEW CONTEXT

Such, on very broad lines, promises to be tomorrow’s theology; such is already in some measure today’s theology. The original revelation, of course, in all its pristine power; the developing tradition too, with its doctrinal formulations and its ceaseless effort to understand; but all this in a fresh context, where the moving forces, the thrilling ideas, are person and community, commitment and action, responsibility and response, encounter and experience, liberty and love.

In this context it is the function of theology to be not a queen but a servant. On three levels: the City of God, the City of Man, and what I can only call the No-

City. Theology must serve, as she has always served, the man committed above all to God. Theology must serve, as she has rarely served, the man committed only to man. And theology must serve, as she has never served, the man committed to Nothing.

The challenge to tomorrow’s theology of service is provocative, intoxicating, frightening. The challenge rings clear from an impassioned paragraph in which Avery Dulles has voiced his concern over an ecumenism in danger of over-emphasizing the past, an ecumenism of interest to only an elite because it does not take its stand in the midst of living men. Father Dulles writes:

CHALLENGE OF THE SECULAR

“From many quarters . . . one hears the call for a new ecumenism—one less committed to historical theological controversies and more in touch with contemporary secular man; one less turned in upon itself, more open to the world and its concerns. The great decisions affecting man’s future are being made in the sphere of the secular; and Christianity does not seem to be there. A cry to all the churches rises up from the heart of modern man: ‘Come to us where we are. Help us to make the passage into the coming technocratic age without falling into the despair and brutality of a new paganism. . . . If the charity of the Good Samaritan burns in your hearts, show that you share our desires and aspirations. In our struggle to build the city of man, we need the support which your faith and hope alone can give. If you remain comfortably in your churches and cloisters, we are much afraid that God will become a stranger to modern life. Christianity, secluded in a world of its own, will turn into a mere relic to be cherished by a few pious souls.’”

Paul and the American Experience

Sister Dulcissima Smith and
Sister Maria C. Harris

A new world, a new religion, and a new cosmos—such are the constituents of the American experience. Radically “other” than any civilization before it, America marks, as far as any reality can, a totally new happening for mankind. Accepting such a thesis as valid, and realizing that catechesis is always culturally grounded, should not our catechizing be taking these elements of the American experience into consideration?

Such, at any rate, is the question we wish to explore here, and this for three reasons: (1) the catechetical movement in the United States is experiencing a reaction of skepticism—the kerygmatic approach, the biblical-doctrinal-liturgical categories have been tried and found, if not wanting, at least open to doubt, and there is a search for some kind of more relevant vehicle; (2) the adoption and adaptation of European methods suggested periodically is very possibly tantamount to catechizing “against the grain” of the American psyche, and so there is a second search for a more indige-

nous framework; (3) an examination of three of the most prominent Pauline themes (newness, community and universalism) indicates that much of the dynamism within them can be liberated in a vital and empirical manner through a comparison with three basic American themes.

America came into being in the midst of cultural and extra-cultural happenings which were new to the human situation as a whole. As John McDermott has pointed out, three great psychical renderings characterize the sixteenth century: the “new world” discovered by Columbus, the “new religion” triggered by the Reformation, and the “new cosmos” made evident by Coper-

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nicus. In a very real sense the Americans *had* to be born thinking differently—they were the first post-discovery, post-Lutheran, post-Copernican nation. Three gigantic revolutions had shaken mankind, providing an entirely new set of primary categories for human experience. In *The Invention of America*, Edmundo O’Gorman has described the first revolution:

MAN’S WORLD

“The moment that the *Orbis Terrarum* was conceived as transcending its ancient insular bounds, the archaic notion of the world as a limited space in the universe assigned to man by God wherein he might gratefully dwell lost its *raison d’être*. Since then man has been in a position to comprehend that his world has really no bounds because it is in any and every part of the universe of which he can possess himself; that the world is not something that was providentially given to him as a dwelling-place but something of his own making, and therefore something for which he is responsible as owner and master.”

The second sixteenth-century revolution was equally unique. The splintering and fragmenting of the religious world sent Puritans and Pilgrims to the new continent, where they had to start from scratch on every major problem. The newness was not only in the taming of the land but also in the continuation of the basic Reformational attitude that one must turn from structured versions of existence in order to be open to entirely new sources of salvation.

The third revolution that affected the birth of America was the Copernican revolution, in the midst of which man ceased to consider himself as living in a “cosmic jail” and came to realize that the universe he inhabited was of his own making and bore a meaning which he gave it. Given the convergence of these three “revolutions” at the time the American nation came into being, it is reasonable that the psyche of the man born into this milieu would bear its imprint. History agrees: birth into a new world has given the American a passion for *newness*; birth into a pluralistic society formed in large measure by Protes-

tantism has constantly challenged him to create *community*; and the emergence of a scientific and rationalistic attitude toward the universe occasioned by Copernicanism has developed in him a *boundless faith in himself and creation* that is radically open-ended. It is on this foundation that the following catechesis of St. Paul and his message is laid.

Novelty is a category that surrounds and pervades the American experience—novelty in the sense of newness, uniqueness, pristine coming-into-being. The American was born into this newness. The word “new” speaks to him immediately, a psychological consistency, for the nation is not just metaphorically, but in reality, a new world. Long before the American civilization itself developed, thinking men probed the results of Columbus’ voyages in such terms, though the probing involved the painful rejection of ideas accepted for centuries and the structuring of different kinds of relationships between man and man, man and cosmos, man and God.

NEW FRONTIERS

When the nation did come into being, the Great Seal of the United States read, “A new order for the ages,” and the government and its constitution were unique in world history. From the beginning, the American moved into totally new territory. When asked, “What’s over the Alleghenies?” he could only answer, “I don’t know” and then proceed to find out. After the original thirteen colonies banded into an infant nation, a process for the admission of “new” states was devised by which these territories became part of the union. Moving into our own day, President Kennedy’s “New Frontier” captured the national imagination, being as it was not simply a slogan but the expression of an ingrained characteristic.

What the American did was to remake the whole social, political, economic and moral structure of the world. Classes were abolished from the beginning, government rested with the governed, unlimited tracts of virgin territory and incalculable natural resources presaged unlimited economic opportunity for all, and the emphasis on reli-

gious toleration was a new *modus vivendi* in a world where state religions were an established and accepted segment of every country's national life.

In the light of these considerations, it is more than interesting to turn to St. Paul. A colonist himself, like his American counterpart, it can be argued that this diaspora Jew was a man whose conviction, philosophy, experience and life were calculated to remake the entire social, political, economic and moral structure of the world. Furthermore, just as the discovery of the New World meant that in geographical terms man had to abandon his belief in insularity, so the Jew, Paul, an "Israelite of the posterity of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom. 11:1) came to understand that "Now we have been set free from the Law, having died to that by which we were held down, so that we may serve in a new spirit and not according to the outworn letter" (Rom. 7:6), abandoning on the human/spiritual level an isolationism, an insularity that had previously existed. What resulted for man in both cases was a new way of looking at himself and a need to reassess his own possibilities.

CATECHIST'S PLAN

The teacher structuring a catechesis of Paul and his mission in such terms recognizes in him a man with a passion for newness and an eye to the unexplored. These are insights borne out by countless references, each of which could be developed at length; pre-eminently, of course, is Christ, the NEW ADAM, head of all mankind (Col. 1:15; Rom. 5:12ff.), who is the Image of God (2 Cor. 4:4). There is the NEW MAN—with Christ, the whole organism of this new man assumes a new form and constitutes the object of Christian anthropology (Eph. 4:22-30; Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 6:4-10; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:1-11; Rom. 8:29). For Paul, the Christian is a NEW MOSES (2 Cor. 3:1-18); Paul himself acts the part of a NEW ELIJAH, raising the young man Eutychus from death (Acts 20:10).

Beyond individual figures, Paul sees a totally NEW CREATION: "If, then, any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the former

things have passed away" (2 Cor. 5:17); "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision but only a new creation is of any account" (Gal. 6:15); and finally Paul sees in the "mystery which in other ages was not known to the sons of men, as now it has been revealed" (Eph. 3:5; cf. also Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Cor. 2:7-10; Col. 2:2-3) a totally NEW REALITY. It is a beautifully human coincidence that eighteen centuries later, De Tocqueville, in his *Journey to America*, spoke of the American nation in highly similar terms, writing:

"When the earth was given to men by the Creator, the earth was inexhaustible, but men were weak and ignorant, and when they had learned to take advantage of the treasures which it contained, they already covered its surface and were soon obliged to earn by the sword an asylum for repose and freedom. Just then—North America was discovered *as if it had been kept in reserve by the Deity and had just risen from beneath the waters of the Deluge*" (*italics mine*).

PROGRESSIVE TRANSFORMATION

Some years ago Fr. George Montague pointed out that the function of this newness in Paul was that it became a principle of progressive transformation, that the inward man, renewed day by day, grows "newer and newer," created in Christ Jesus as he is by the power of baptism (*The Bible Today*, Nov. 1962).

The rending of the old order of religious univocity, triggered by the Protestant Reformation, had profound implications for America. Hesitantly at first, then gradually more and more confidently, the first Americans found that the radical cracking of centuries-old tradition had a positive value. It had the specifically American dimension of openness to wholly new resources and structures. These would eventually develop into movements such as those described by Joseph Blau, in writing of the American Enlightenment (*Men and Movements in American Philosophy*):

"Salvation was no longer the burning center of men's attention; human happiness had replaced it as the goal of human effort.

The study of man and his natural and political environment became important. . . . Out of the ferment Americans in the late colonial period and the first years of national existence developed an ethics of secular benevolence, a deistic theology, a faith in the perfectibility of man and in the progress of science, a democratic political theory and a *laissez faire* theory of economics, all culminating in a cosmopolitan ideal of world citizenship."

LIKENESS TO ST. PAUL

These American characteristics of opening oneself to new experience, of turning to wholly new resources for salvation, and of creating a new order that is cosmopolitan and pluralistic have their spiritual analogue in the mission and message of Paul. We see it initially in his conversion, in the total openness of his "Lord, what would you have me to do?" (Acts 9:6); we witness it in his acceptance of the terminal nature of the Mosaic Law and its completion in Christ—a cracking of the old order and its replacement in the incarnate Lord.

A second consideration arising from the new religion was paradoxical. Emerging from the American emphasis on toleration for all religions came the realization that *although* there were many—Quakers, Puritans, Catholics, Anglicans—one community could be formed, that one nation of united states, separate yet equal, could and did come into being. Diversity became the *sine qua non* of unity, and the more diversity was upheld, as in the publication of the Bill of Rights, the more the nation flourished. (Archeologists studying our civilization five thousand years from now will note on our coins: *E pluribus unum*.) Politically the situation was the same: two major parties representing divergent views; smaller splinter groups suggesting reforms that historically were accepted; and each contributing to the formation of a national community that in time became the most powerful in the world.

Diversity in community is a dominant theme in Paul. To the Romans he writes, "To Greeks and to foreigners, to learned and unlearned I am debtor" (1:14); "For

there is no distinction, as all have sinned and have need of the glory of God" (3:23); "Is God the God of the Jews only, and not of the Gentiles also? Indeed of the Gentiles also" (3:29-30). And to the Corinthians he writes:

"For free though I was as to all, unto all I have made myself a slave that I might gain the more converts. And I have become to the Jews a Jew that I might gain the Jews; to those under the Law, as one under the Law (though not myself under the Law), that I might gain those under the Law; to those without the Law, as one without the Law (though I am not without the law of God, but am under the law of Christ), that I might gain those without the Law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might save all (I Cor. 9:19-22)."

Perhaps Paul's best known verbalization of many being one comes in *Galatians* 3:27-29:

"For all you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are the offspring of Abraham, heirs according to promise."

PAUL'S PREPARATION

Dibelius makes the observation (see his 1953 work *Paul*) that by reason of his background, education and training, Paul was geared to accomplish the task of creating community—in a sense his geography precipitated his mission:

"It is unlikely that Paul would have become the great Christian missionary if his home had not been in this wider Judaism [of the diaspora], if he had not been able to read and write Greek and possessed the Septuagint as his Bible, if he had not been used to accommodating himself to foreign customs and if he had not had an eye for the wider world of highways by land and sea and for the great cities of the Mediterranean world."

Given this background, however, what he accomplishes is the bearing of Christianity to the world of the Gentiles.

Finally to be noted is the comparison existing between the American nation as a moral unit, a body politic, and Paul's doctrine of the Body of Christ. President Kennedy had this sense of moral unity, and when it was disastrously threatened as it was by the events in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, he expressed his thoughts to the American people:

"We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the Scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution. . . . Now the time has come for this nation to fulfill its promise . . . we face a moral crisis as a country and as a people."

A UNITED PEOPLE

Kennedy's words were very much like the rebuke Paul addressed to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:12-13), saying to them, "Don't you see you're splitting up the Church? You're rending Christ in pieces. . . . The Christian community should be one with the unity of Christ." There is, further, a notable affinity observable between certain aspects of Paul's doctrine of the Body of Christ and the American naturalistic emphasis. To begin with, Paul's use of the word "body" is typically Hebraic. Father Barnabas Ahern has pointed out (*Catholic Biblical Quarterly* April 1961), that "A Hebrew using the word 'body' in a religious context includes in that term the whole person with emphasis on what is sensible and somatic. This Semitic thought pattern is also our own . . . we deal with one another as corporeal persons." Father Ahern's "our own" can refer most specifically to the American pragmatic view of the body and our emphasis on man's natural and political environment, concepts totally familiar to the Hebrews.

Secondly, Paul's simile of the human body, appearing especially in *Romans* 12 and 1 *Corinthians* 12, receives its most detailed treatment in the latter and to this day remains the classical scriptural expression of human community. The notable fact about this last, and the point that we wish to make in conclusion, is that one of the rare examples in the history of philosophy of a man taking community as his central

philosophical consideration was an American, Josiah Royce. In *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, John Smith comments that Royce's central principal of community "is intended to create one out of many. It aims at overcoming what is divisive and preserving what is distinctive in a plurality of individuals which, left to themselves, would exhaust each other in fruitless struggle. . . . He saw the basic problem of the American experiment: How is it possible to harmonize many different and opposing wills without resorting to a collectivism in which all individuals are lost. For him, community was the answer."

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND WORLD COMMUNITY

One could hope, as a Christian and as an American, that in some way Paul's theology of community and Royce's philosophy of community might be wedded, becoming operative in our national life and serving as a paradigmatic sign for the total world-community which we are in the process of creating.

The world-view precipitated by the Copernican revolution and the world-view characteristic of Christianity are identical: for man, nothing is impossible. This is, most basically, what is meant here by universalism—the idea of a total, all-embracing, pervasive, unlimited and unrestricted set of possibilities for man and his world. The Copernican revolution was radical indeed; the universe was seen no longer as static but dynamic, and man as its center could shape it as he saw fit. But the Christian revolution was even more radical: God had become man and irrevocably gifted humanity with the unbelievable option of being caught up into the Godhead. The two attitudes, post-Copernican and Christian, converge in the American experience and Paul.

The first characteristic evident in both is a psychological security. Crèvecoeur, in his *Letters from an American Farmer*, describes the early American as a man without restrictions, expansive and optimistic:

"He begins to feel the effects of a sort of resurrection; hitherto he had not lived, but simply vegetated; he now feels himself a man, because he is treated as such."

With Paul, there is a similar security. Crèvecoeur's picture of the American forgetting his former servitude comes to ultimate completion and fulfillment in the profundity of Paul's description of the man in Christ:

"I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38-39)."

APPEAL TO EXPERIENCE

The second direction that life in the new cosmos has taken has been the continual appeal to experience. The American was a new kind of sovereign, receiving and *making* his own government; he was a new kind of creator, pioneering into virgin wilderness and wresting a nation from nature; he was a new kind of scientist, researching the field of natural history. With Paul, there is also a constant reliance on experience. The most peripatetic of the Apostles, he writes theology *ad hoc* and with few exceptions grounds his teaching in his own experience and the peculiar experience of his hearers. To the Athenians he preaches an unknown God, to the Corinthians he urges unity amidst factions, to the Thessalonians he sends hope, to the Colossians he heralds the headship of Christ over intermediary beings.

And finally, there is in Paul and in the new world a genuine reverence for process, development and change. Just as the American temper, with its emphasis on growth and change, would have been sheer illusion in a Ptolemaic world (McDermott), so in

the life of the spirit, the title that is accorded to Paul is "The Theologian of Becoming." Thus, as Fr. George Montague has observed (*The Bible Today*, November 1962):

"Christians are not only saved men but they are in the process of being saved (1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15). In the same letter in which Paul says that God saved us (2 Tim. 1:9) he says that he himself suffers for the elect that they may attain salvation. Christians are 'the sanctified' but Paul asks God to sanctify them through and through (1 Tim. 5:23); the process continues (1 Tim. 4:3) till they are blameless in holiness."

HOPE FOR THE WORLD

Leslie Dewart, who is not an American, has written in *Christianity and Revolution* that the United States is the hope of the world and that he places his faith and his trust in this nation because of the evolutionary, creative cultural forces that have produced it. If Americans aware of these dominant influences in their background would use them with wisdom and intelligence, if they would actuate them as sons of God, then it is more than an ephemeral dream that the fulfillment of creation Paul hungered for in *Romans* might become a reality:

"For the eager longing of creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God. For creation was made subject to vanity—not by its own will but by reason of him who made it subject—in hope, because creation itself also will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God (Rom. 8:18-21)."



What Is An Anonymous Christian?

Peter Hebblethwaite

A phrase which theologians have hit upon in recent years is "anonymous Christian." It has had great success. It was used as the title of a book by Anita Roper, first published in Germany and just published in the United States by Sheed and Ward (*Anonymous Christian*, 1966), and Karl Rahner has added the prestige of his name to its diffusion. The object of this article is to see what it means, if it means anything, and whether it is a helpful notion.

I want first to criticize the expression from the standpoint of conservative theology; then I want to criticize it from the standpoint of ordinary language. Having thus demolished it, we will see it rising again from the ashes, theologically justified; then we will see its pastoral implications.

The conservative theologian would be extremely distrustful of the expression "anonymous Christian" and say that it leads to confusion or worse. If we asked him to define "Christian," he would reply that the answer of the New Testament and the answer of tradition is the same: a Christian is someone who has answered positively the central question of the gospels and said

with Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16, 16-17). You know whether you have made this profession of faith or not. St. Paul and the Code of Canon Law are in agreement that a Christian is one who has been baptized and conforms to the pattern of the death and resurrection of Christ. Once again, you know whether you have been baptized or not; you can even get a certificate to prove it.

The more one goes on with definitions of this kind, each of which certainly unveils an aspect of what a Christian is, the more difficult it becomes to suggest that there is some kind of a shadowy region in which people dwell who are Christians but who are not aware of the fact. The stress here is on visibility, precision and clear-consciousness. From this point of view,

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"anonymous Christian" makes little sense, since a presumed relationship of which one is not aware is hard to understand.

The expression can be criticized also from the point of view of ordinary language. The writer of an anonymous letter, for example, knows perfectly well who he is; he has no doubts about his own identity or about who wrote the letter. It is the person who receives the letter who is foxed. But that would imply that an anonymous Christian is somebody who *knows* that he is Christian but who chooses to conceal the fact. And so the expression would be analogous to "crypto-Communist." A crypto-Communist is an acknowledged, fully-fledged Party member, but he chooses to conceal this fact in order to confuse his bourgeois environment. But those who use the phrase "anonymous Christian" certainly do not mean that. Indeed, they mean the opposite: it is not, they would say, that the unbeliever in question, the anonymous Christian, knows his own identity; on the contrary, he does not know his own identity; he is in ignorance of it or groping for it. There is no need to make a fetish of ordinary usage, but its analysis can help us to avoid some of the grosser confusions and provide the basis for rejecting the expression "anonymous Christian." I have given two reasons for disliking this expression. But if we can overcome our dislike for it, it is possible to see it as fulfilling a need. The first argument will be based on Christology, the second on Catholicity.

CHRIST ENTERS INTO HISTORY

It is highly significant that the Council, in speaking of the coming of Christ among us, should say not simply that Christ came into the *world*, but that Christ came into *history* (*Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, paragraph 38). There is a nuance here. If one simply says that Christ came into the world, it is as though he were parachuted down into a world whose meaning, such as it was, existed and continued independently of his coming. But Christ enters human history; and one of the ideas we can most usefully learn from

Teilhard de Chardin is the idea of the world not as *cosmos*, fixed and immutable, but as *cosmogenesis*, that is, as developing, evolving, going somewhere. Christ has entered into this process and restored its direction.

Christ not only breaks into world history; he comes into it as Second Adam, as the definitive man, man according to the mind of the creator, and he is therefore related to all men. This theme is found in St. Paul, in the Fathers, and it is well expressed in the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*:

"He who is the 'image of the invisible God' (Col. 1, 15), is the perfect man who restored to the sons of Adam the divine likeness. . . . Since he took human nature to himself, not extinguishing it, by that same token nature is in us raised to a sublime dignity. For the Son of God by his incarnation did in a fashion unite himself with every man" (paragraph 22).

As a consequence, that fitting into the pattern of the passion and resurrection of Christ, which is *the* Christian experience, the experience of the conscious and lucid professing Christian, is *also* the experience of all men indirectly, confusedly, but nonetheless really. And it is these people who can helpfully be called anonymous Christians.

PASCHAL MYSTERY REACHES EVERY MAN

It is not only those who believe explicitly in Christ, who share in his paschal mystery:

"It holds for all men of goodwill in whose hearts grace works in an invisible manner. Christ died for everyone; everyone's ultimate vocation is the same, divine vocation; then we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers everybody the possibility of sharing in some way known to God in this paschal mystery" (paragraph 22).

This experience is in some sense open to all men, and the relationship, at least from Christ to them, exists and exists effectively. For example, you do not have to be consciously a Christian to learn, from experience of life, that a grasping, possessive attitude in love eventually undermines and

destroys love; that love involves some sort of death to oneself and to one's egotisms. And this as an experience, not a theory, is open to anybody. A faithful Communist who genuinely thinks that he is serving the human community makes the same discovery, even though on the level of consciousness he will certainly hotly deny that Christ has anything to do with it. One has to stress again that, through the incarnation of Christ, something real has happened, something radically new has broken into human history and that some sort of relationship to Christ exists in all men. It is, of course, an object of faith. It cannot be seen or grasped empirically, although there can be echoes and anticipations of it in ordinary experience which we are perhaps too quick to call "secular."

MISSION TO BE CATHOLIC

The second theological basis of our argument is *Catholicity*. It is a tragedy that the word "catholic" should have acquired a restrictive meaning, in contradistinction to "Protestant." The word "catholic" is a reminder that Christ is related to all men and to all that is man, really, but not yet consciously, on their side. Consequently the mission of the Church can be deduced simply from the fact that the Church is catholic, or better, to be catholic (cf. *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity*, paragraph 1). In Christ we have not only a changed state and a changed relationship, but we have also, as the Decree says, "a manifestation and an epiphany of God's will in history, and the fulfillment of that will in history" (paragraph 9).

Catholicity implies that although Christ was of a particular race and culture, there is nothing in man which is not potentially Christo-form, and no culture that is foreign, no civilization in which the teaching of Christ would be an intrusion. And if missionaries have not always had this experience, this is partly because much of the time they have been converting people to Western European culture as much as to Christianity. Far from being opposed to diversity, Catholicity implies it, because

only when each individual voice in the orchestra is itself can it contribute to the *symphonia* of Catholicity. You perfect the Catholicity of the Church by expanding it (paragraph 6).

So far I have been concerned entirely with what Karl Rahner calls the Christology from on high, from above, with what is given, with what Christ has done for us, without us, so to speak. This provides the justification for speaking of anonymous Christians. They are precisely the people who are related to Christ, whether they know it or not. Some would prefer to contrast the "latent" Church with the "manifest" Church; but I think the expression which probably has come to stay is "anonymous Christians." Now we have to sketch out rapidly a Christology from below and see what it means in practice to speak of anonymous Christians and whether any pastoral conclusions can be drawn from this view.

GRACE WIDER THAN THE VISIBLE CHURCH

The first consequence of these views is that the sphere of grace is something wider than the visible Church. This position must be stated with care. The Church is the sacrament of Christ, the privileged sign of Christ to the world, and the privileged *locus* of grace. That is why, if one wants to assent to Christ consciously, one should seek baptism. But this does not exhaust the activity of the Holy Spirit among men. The scriptural basis for this position is found in St. John's prologue on the "light which enlightens every man who comes into this world" and in St. Paul's teaching that God wills the salvation of all men. The Spirit is at work in all men who are trying to live according to their conscience and to remain faithful to some sort of ideal. How, then, must the Church regard this grace outside the Church? Is it possible to identify it?

There is of course a general problem in being aware of grace, and it would be better to speak of discerning grace. The *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* gives hints of what this might mean.

For example, it describes modern humanism thus: "We are witnesses of the birth of a new humanism, in which man is defined by his responsibility for his fellowmen and to history" (paragraph 55). This is an interesting way of putting it. The Fathers say they were "witnesses" of this development. They do not claim to be the authors of it, a claim which in any case would be implausible; nor did they see it as a threat or a rival ideology. They note its existence and try to read it in the light of the Gospel. Humanism, defined in this way, is characteristic of the best of our period of history and is regarded as an echo of the Gospel, or rather, since that is to look backwards, as an aspiration toward the Gospel which describes a fraternal community that must "redeem the time." This humanism is not, once again, outside the sphere of grace. It may be incomplete; it may indeed be dangerously incomplete, but it is in mind with the basic Christian inspiration.

CHRISTIAN VALUES IN HUMANISM

We all know that this humanism can be agnostic, atheistic or anti-theistic. But even in its anti-theistic form it is not perhaps to be rejected without examination. If one considers this form of anti-theistic humanism in its positive rather than its negative aspect, one would perhaps find much to agree with. Take, for example, Marx's remark: "Man is the supreme being for man." Taken by itself, this clearly is intended to substitute man for God, to replace the notion of a divine being by man. But it remains highly ambiguous. Does it mean man in the concrete, my neighbor? In that case it is an affirmation of the Christian position, except that one can provide no grounds for saying that my neighbor should be the supreme being for me. If it means men in general, mankind, then my neighbor, man in the concrete, can be sacrificed for the good of future mankind; and this we know is what has frequently happened.

To make sense of Marx's affirmation, to ground it, one has to give it a Christian basis. In the light of the Christology

sketched out above, Karl Barth's remark that since God became man, man is the measure of all things, might provide common ground for meeting with the humanists. Further, there is a sense in saying that theological statements are anthropological statements. Translated into simpler language: statements about God are also statements about man.

One can perhaps go further than this and say that though Christ is the self-disclosure of God, in fact he discloses not very much; but what he does reveal is what man's attitude to the Father and his fellowmen ought to be: an attitude of gratitude and openness and service of the Father through service of the brethren. Therefore, insofar as people serve mankind in the concrete, in whatever way, and insofar as they build up unities, insofar as they assume the responsibility for history, in all these ways they are anonymously Christian. The fact that they would refuse this explanation does not prevent some of them from being superbly anonymous Christians.

GOD AND MAN IN PARTNERSHIP

They prefer to call themselves humanists and thus perpetuate the misunderstanding which has bedeviled talk about God for the last four hundred years in Europe—if not longer. The misunderstanding is to regard God and man in competition, and to imagine a sort of roundabout and oscillating process: anything which is attributed to God is taken away from man, and if man is to be adult and responsible, he must deny the existence of God. This misunderstanding is at the root of modern atheism. And it is simply false. Man is most responsible and most adult when he is most answerable for what he does, when he responds to his situation and takes into account all the factors in it, refusing the facile consolations of myth. It follows that man is most responsible and mature when he accepts the psychological conditionings which have made him what he is and accepts his relationship to God as constitutive of his manhood. We do not become ourselves unless we are accepted by other people; and we do not be-

come ourselves on the deepest level until we have responded to the invitation proffered in Christ.

In other words, one must not only reject, one must reverse the basic premise of atheistic humanism and say that in order to affirm man one must affirm God. But the credibility of this assertion depends obviously on Christians. If they appear to be cowering or timid or half-men, they are unfaithful to the full catholic vision of man renewed in Christ. The *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* sums it up by saying that the more one follows Christ, the perfect man, the more human one becomes (paragraph 41).

SALVATION OF THE UNBELIEVER

None of what I have been saying is startlingly new. One very traditional notion that can be explained in this way is that it is impossible to keep the moral law for long except under the influence of grace. Or again, that it is impossible to hunger after justice and righteousness for long except under the influence of grace. In other words, everything which contributes to the humanization of man, to his true fulfillment, and every disinterested service of one's fellow-men (whatever theory may lie behind it) brings a person nearer to Christ and is under the influence of grace. The view I have been outlining also explains how the unbeliever is saved, since he cannot be saved without reference to Christ, whether he knows it or not.

It also, explains, finally, what "conversion" would mean: to understand Christianity, one does not have to turn aside from one's own experience and desires, but

on the contrary to deepen them and understand where they are leading. As paragraph 8 of the *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity* states:

"By manifesting Christ, the Church reveals to men the real truth about their condition and their total vocation. For Christ is the source and model of that renewed humanity, penetrated with brotherly love, sincerity and a peaceful spirit, to which all aspire."

Conversion would therefore mean, for the unbeliever, an encounter between his deepest desires and the message of Christ and he would have a sense of coming home at last.

SALVATION THROUGH THE CHURCH

I end with a personal experience. In preaching, nothing happens unless the Spirit speaks to the Spirit, unless the hearer and the speaker are prompted by the Holy Spirit within. That is obvious enough: we cannot say *Abba, Father*, except in the Spirit. But what is less obvious is that one can have the same experience listening to even Marxists or humanists.

Though they would be appalled to hear me say so, I have never felt that such discussion was taking place "outside the Church" so to speak, but rather within it. This is not really so surprising if we remember that there is no salvation without reference to the Church, that is, without reference to Christ. There are manifest and conscious Christians, and there are others who are much nearer to Christ than they know. They can, I believe, helpfully be called anonymous Christians.

Books Received

Has the New Liturgy
Changed You?

Mary Perkins Ryan

Paulist Press Deus Books. 95c

The brief chapters of this book originally appeared in a column in many Catholic papers. They were inspired by a desire to help those who were disturbed by changes in the liturgy introduced especially by Vatican II. Some of our parishioners received little adequate preparation for this revolution in their habits of worship. In other churches, the changes were adopted with great reluctance and often with highly vocal opposition. And because of the interim character of our present rites, with every expectation of continued development, the "present situation cannot be a comfortable or satisfactory one."

This well-written, lively and practical book brings together some fifty of these short essays and they combine to form an excellent summary of a healthier liturgical outlook. They are assembled in six sections, following the structure of the Mass. Expert catechist, liturgist and writer, Mary Perkins Ryan brings all her talents to bear on a crying need for most of our parishioners in this excellent book. "It will serve its purpose," she writes, "if it in any way helps its reader to see the changes in the Mass (and in the Church) as signs of life, so that they can get with them and thus move forward to a more truly living worship of the living God."

What the Spirit
Says to the Churches

Hubert Richards

Kenedy. \$4.50

"A Key to the Apocalypse of St. John" is the apt sub-title to this illuminating, readable book by an able scripture scholar and accomplished writer. The author believes that while the Apocalypse is perhaps the least read book of the Bible, its profound message ought not to be missed by con-

temporary Christians. Eccentrics, crackpots and fanatics, by their fantastic interpretations of its symbolism, have caused some of this neglect. But the unusual literary form employed has baffled even the most balanced lover of the scriptures. Father Richards provides just the key to unlock the rich treasures of this last book of the Bible.

John's was not the only apocalypse. In a time of persecution and distress caused by the twin evils of emperor-worship and Gnosticism he turned to a literary device that had well served God's people in the past. A symbolic, purposely obscure and imaginative writing history 'forward instead of backward' gave the reader enduring hopes to face the temptations to apostasy. As Israel had recurrent need to keep alive God's promises as uttered by the prophets, so the early Christians faced new dangers and a need to vivify their confidence and hope. The apocalyptic form gave John a medium that would arouse curiosity, hide the meaning from the Church's opponents, and yet re-affirm the old truth that the Christian must pass through Christ's death if he is to attain eternal life.

The Sacraments of
Life and Worship

Rev. John P. Schanz

Bruce. \$4.75 and \$2.50

This is a volume in the "Contemporary College Theology Series." In common with other books in this series the aim is to avoid a merely catechetical or apologetic approach. The primary audience to which it is directed is made up of thoughtful believers who seek a theological understanding relevant to the presuppositions of our age and culture.

The present book opens with a discussion of sacramental theology as presented today by theologians like Edward Schillebeeckx and Karl Rahner. The writer lucidly expounds this understanding of the sacraments as receiving their meaning from the

Paschal Mystery. They are then explained as the personal acts of Christ, risen and glorified, who now acts through his Church. Readers who may have been more or less baffled understanding the sacraments as encounters with Christ, because of older expositions of sacramental causality, can here make a more serene transition to a newer outlook and experience.

The second section is concerned with the sacraments of initiation. Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist come in for detailed yet lucid discussion. These are explained in terms of 1) Salvation History; 2) the development of the administration of the sacrament; 3) the liturgical rite now in use; 4) the theological doctrine concerning each of these sacraments. The biblical aspects of creation, typology, and the Holy Spirit and the Apostolic Church are all well done.

The New Church:
Essays in Catholic Reform
Daniel Callahan
Scribner's. \$4.50

The "new" Church discussed by Daniel Callahan in this series of essays is the one that is slowly and painfully emerging—not one that has arrived. But the author faces most of the issues that inevitably foster or hinder that necessary growth of the Church. This he does with intelligence and journalistic ability—along with faith, hope and balance.

While he is unmistakably one of those Catholics who regards Christ's Church as a task to be completed and not merely a gift to be preserved, he often takes a stand mid-way between the liberal and the conservative. This he does not so much out of caution but because he often sees a problem at deeper levels than either the liberal or stand-patter. The birth control controversy, for example, he regards as essentially a question of the Church's teaching authority even more than as a moral issue.

Most of the crucial puzzles facing Catholics are confronted: Catholic tradition and secular pluralism, the reappraisal of Catholic education, the death of God controversy, and the touchy problem of achieving greater freedom and honesty in the Church.

The writer is particularly good in his treatment of the position of the Catholic layman, better informed and educated, yet often ill-at-ease in our secular culture and often unwelcome in some Catholic theological circles. The absence of established structures through which the layman can bring his knowledge, experience and devotion to bear effectively is frustrating and can lead to a dangerous disillusionment.

The writer rejects the notion that our dilemma is a clear-cut choice between authority and obedience, both of which are essential. He rather envisions it as a need for the Church among all the people of God high and low, to exhibit to the world an experience of genuine freedom that honors the basic Christian commitment. A reading of this book can provoke sadness at our defects, agreement or dissent regarding the writer's analyses or remedies; but it cannot fail to stir gratitude for the honest, lucid exposition of the Church's needs.

J.T.M.

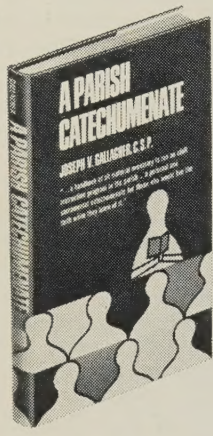
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A personal and sacramental
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A Parish Catechumenate

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Besides the instruction outlines, this book offers bible services for use during the catechumenate, plans for the sacramental steps of baptism, full texts for homilies during the services, key questions for discussion groups and recommended outside reading. \$4.95



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